was also a conservative romantic, a trait that became particularly pronounced in his Second World War columns. Writing of British naval valour, he proclaimed that "the spirit of Elizabethan days has come back to these islands once more." (p. 131) His tone became more muted after the war, when the Labour Party which he despised came to power and implemented many of the provisions of the 1942 Beveridge Report. Baxter was vehemently opposed to socialism and the welfare state, siding decisively with the former in what he called the "battle of the individual against the state" (p. 242). His most evocative columns, however, such as that on the 1936 Abdication crisis, brought home to Canadians those events gripping what many still saw as the "mother dominion."

If I had one reservation about the book, it is that Baxter and the Canadian connection sometimes fades from view as Thompson sets out the context of successive British high political dramas. More might also be said about how, and in what ways, the ideas and sentiments Baxter espoused in his London Letters were received by his *Maclean's* readers. Thompson gives us circulation numbers which attest to the magazine's self-proclaimed status as "Canada's National Magazine," but how Baxter's ideas shaped Canadians' political, economic, social and cultural activities is left mostly unsaid. Nonetheless, this is a fine book, closely researched and carefully written. It is particularly strong on Baxter during the appeasement years, reflecting Thompson's expertise in this period. Historians of the British world would benefit greatly from more transnational studies in the model of Thompson's work on Beverley Baxter.

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Weil, François – *Family Trees: A History of Genealogy on America*. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University press, 2013. Pp. 304.

With this book, well-respected François Weil proposes a history of the Americanization of genealogy as a (West) European practice and the transposition of its main concepts, such as lineage and forebears, into the North American context. Weil admits he was not interested in family history before taking on this project. The inspiration came in 2008, from his surprise at the "engrossing fascination" (p. 1) given by journalists and the public at Barack and Michelle Obama's respective ancestries. At the confluence of racial affiliation, the history of slavery and immigration, and issues of class, Weil argues that their genealogies beckoned enquiries into the meaning of personal and collective history, but most importantly on the importance of family history in the United States. As such, Family Trees casts its gaze broadly, over four centuries, tracing the evolution of the practice, the varying rationales of its actors, and the main institutions that led the way.

Weil's assertion that there is a relative dearth of historical research on genealogy is somewhat misleading. Though it is true that there have been relatively few studies by American historians, the study of genealogy has been a rich field among historical anthropologists, ethnohistorians, sociologists and members of related fields all over the Western World, especially in the late 1980s and 1990s. However, there has been very few syntheses of these works, and few publications since the beginning of the 21st century (my own 2006 monograph being a rare exception). As such, Weil's book is indeed more than welcome: he presents a readable comprehensive overview of the history of the practice and meaning of genealogy in the United States from the late 17th century, based both on the studies that do exist and hitherto unknown examples from his own original research.

Weil divides his book into four lengthy periods he calls "genealogical regimes" (p. 5). As such, Weil adheres to the common periodization used by those few historians and sociologists that have studied genealogical practice in North America. Each of these four periods "was articulated around a particular organization of impulses for genealogy [he] describe[s], with one of several of these impulses setting the tone for that regime" (p. 5). Indeed, Weil is more interested in each period's ideological stance about ancestry than at the socio-economic conditions that could have affected the impulses towards genealogy. He looks for its "successive dominant meanings" (p. 5), though he innovates by tracking the commercial aspects of American genealogy throughout its long history.

Prior to the mid-18th century, the American Colonials who researched their ancestry were primarily fulfilling a private quest for a pedigree that would attach their family to British Imperial gentility. It was mostly the purview of New England upper middle classes. By the latter half of the 18th century, with the transition to Independence, the impetus for genealogy shifted as sharply as American politics. Genealogists of middling classes turned to genealogy as a means to ground their family history in the emerging republic. Until the advent of the Civil War, Americans of means would invest scientific value to genealogical research, even as the many genealogists for hire would go to great lengths to invest suitable ancestries for their clients. From the late 1860s to the mid-20th century, as the United States experienced a wave of nationalism, nativism and anti-immigration sentiment, genealogy became more of a search for racial purity and Anglo-Saxon ancestors. "Proper" ancestry would not only allow one admission to numerous hereditary associations and clubs, but was also increasingly associated with overtones of morality and purity. Notably, the advent of Eugenics and its sociological views of genetics easily found strong support among American genealogists who embraced the moral superiority the "correct" ancestors would afford them. After the Second World War and especially from the 1970s, genealogy became a truly popular, democratic and multicultural endeavour. Taken on by Americans of all social and ethnic groups, as well as most socio-economic classes, genealogy now serves new political purposes along side the search for roots and family affiliation. With the genealogical craze sparked by the publication of Alex Haley's Roots (1976) and its associated television series (1977), a host of associations, groups,

and published resources that further allowed for the massive democratization of the search for one's ancestors. Weil insists: "Genealogy has never had a single meaning in American history. Rather it has had successive dominant meanings" (p. 5).

The most innovative portion of Family Trees deals with the period since 1995 and is found in the latter half of chapter 6. With the generalized use of the Web and computers, genealogical practice has been profoundly transformed. Individuals looking for ancestors have an embarrassment of riches when it comes to online databases and family tree software. Weil aptly presents how the genealogy business has boomed in North America because of the efforts of members of the Church of Christ and the Latter Day Saints. These developments have revitalized the commercialization of genealogical practice in a way that even the generalized craze for roots had not in the 1970s. Where this decade had finally opened genealogical research to African-Americans, Jews and Amerindians with the creation of associations and specialized resources, the past fifteen years have opened genealogical practice for anyone with Internet access.

The very recent developments in DNA research have had an even deeper effect, not only in the practice of genealogy, but in the very conceptions of ancestry and race in the United States. With the aid of DNA analysis, "Genealogical research helped ... undermine rigid group categories and emphasize individual situations, uncertain and dramatic as they sometimes were" (p. 207). The discovery of Black enslaved ancestors in a nominally White family, the realization of the true complexity in the ethnic background of most African Americans, among other striking revelations, have helped American society's slow "process of multicultural democratization" (p. 213), even has this process has also been one of commercialization. The ultimate societal meaning of genetic genealogy is yet to be fully understood, though some aspects are already known. Weil underscores that "the return of genetics to genealogy" (p. 206) in the last decade has put traditional primary sources into question. DNA is now seen as more scientific than the careful perusal of archival documents. At the same time, genetics have provided avenues of research for African Americans in the absence of documentary evidence. Weil could have noted that the same can be said of Aboriginals and Acadians elsewhere in North American. Unfortunately, Weil reserves precious few papers to these innovations and fails to provide meaningful conclusions. He is clearly hesitant to resort to sociology or anthropology to analyze the more recent developments in American genealogical practice, which leaves the reader somewhat unfulfilled.

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